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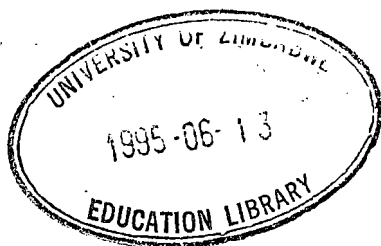
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Gender Issues In Zimbabwe's Two Main English Language Textbooks In The Primary Schools.

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ABSTRACT

A content analysis of two series of English language textbooks by two publishers predominantly used in Zimbabwean Primary Schools was made. A total of approximately 779 units of work were analyzed for gender ratios in professional occupations, domestic chores, leading characters in stories and sexist language. The study found that the textbooks reflected a male gender bias and that the textbooks continue to be reprinted without decrying their use and prevalence in schools.

Background

Debate on equality of sexes has been raging on since the sixties and seventies, when there was a growing awareness and awakening of interest in the history of women after it had died in the depression years of the thirties. This awareness was and is still reflected in the emergence of, strengthening and improvement of women studies in universities, liberation movements, institutionalization of government departments for women's affairs, and the various equality of sexes programmes (Perrot, 1989).

Most countries among them Post-Independent Zimbabwe legislated for equality of sexes and those pieces of legislation were followed up by identifying institutions to speed up the process by either reform or innovative strategies. Among the target institutions has been education, and Ballantine (1983) believes that education has been the most obvious because societies are dependent on schools to pass along crucial beliefs and values among them, sex role behaviours and expectations.

Strategies for addressing issues of gender in education have focussed on, among other issues, enrolment, curriculum, achievement (Sherman, 1976; Kaminski in Ballantine, 1985), and teacher attitudes (Delamont, 1980). However, children's literature has received the most attention because language in general and children's textbooks in particular are a source of messages about society's expectations on gender roles.

A call for the scrutiny of children's textbooks for sexist attitudes has been extensive and in some cases has yielded some positive results and public awareness while in others it has not. The New Jersey Feminist group (1973) evaluated sexism in children's texts and found it prevalent. The Bullock Report (1975) recommended that reading schemes stand up to questions about how parental and sex roles are presented.

Studies in Zimbabwe on equality of sexes have focussed on employment opportunities and the struggle for equal representation at higher levels of administration and professional structures (Dorsey, Gaidzanwa and Mupawaenda, 1989; UNICEF, 1982, 1985).

While it is important to examine the nature and impact of sexism on adults, it is probably more important to examine gender issues in children's very early years because childhood is the period where the greater part of the attitudes are developed. It is the purpose of this study to analyze two major series of English language Primary School textbooks in Zimbabwe in as far as they stand up to questions of gender.

Specifically the study seeks answers to the following questions:

- (1) What has been the response of the textbooks to societal and legislative changes on equality of sexes?
- (2) What is the nature of representation of each gender in a variety of contexts:
 - (a) Professional occupations ?
 - (b) Domestic chores ?
 - (c) Leading characters in stories?
 - (d) Sexist language use?

Research Methodology

A content analysis of gender issues in government approved College Press and Longmans language textbooks predominantly used in Zimbabwe's Primary schools was done. A total of approximately 779 units of work were analyzed for gender ratios in professional occupations, domestic chores, leading characters in stories and sexist language.

Frequencies of gender ratios in each series of textbooks were first analyzed separately before combining the frequencies to get the total picture. Frequencies of less than two after combined frequencies of the two publishers series were dropped.

Both Longmans and College Press textbooks, show a male gender bias in six professional occupations; builder and or construction worker, carpenter, farmer, shopkeeper, police officer and doctor/physician recording a 100%, against one female gender biased professional occupation, nurse. Occupation headmaster records 100% in Longmans and 88.9% in College Press in favour of the male gender. The total gender ratios in each publisher show the female gender trailing by 58.4% in Longman series and 49% in College Press series. Combined frequencies in Table 2 below of the two sets of texts show the female gender trailing by 54%.

The class teacher category stands out to be one of the professions where there is a slightly better gender ratio. In the Longman series, the female gender trails by 42.8 but in the head teacher category the female gender records a 0%. In the College Press series, the male gender trails by 11.2% in the class teacher category, the only professional occupation the male gender is trailing, however the female gender trails by 77.8% in the head teacher category (Table 1). Combined frequencies (Table 2), in that profession reflect that overall the female gender still trails by 21.8%, the narrowest margin in the professional occupation gender ratios.

RESULTS

Gender Ratios in Professional Occupations.

Table 1
Professional Occupations: Frequencies By Publishers

| | Series Separate | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------|--------|------|----------|-----|------|------|---------------|------|-------|-----|
| | Longman | | | | Zimbabwe | | | | College Press | | | |
| | Male | | Female | | Total | | Male | | Female | | Total | |
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Head teacher | 2 | 100 | 0 | - | 2 | 100 | 8 | 88.9 | 1 | 11.9 | 9 | 100 |
| Class teacher | 10 | 71.4 | 4 | 28.6 | 14 | 100 | 4 | 44.4 | 5 | 55.6 | 9 | 100 |
| Police Officer | 3 | 100 | 0 | - | 3 | 100 | 1 | 100 | 0 | - | 1 | 100 |
| Nurse | 0 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 0 | - | 3 | 100 | 3 | 100 |
| Doctor | 6 | 100 | 0 | - | 6 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 0 | - | 2 | 100 |
| Shop-keeper | 8 | 88.9 | 1 | 11.1 | 9 | 100 | 2 | 66.7 | 1 | 33.3 | 3 | 100 |
| Builder/ Construction | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Worker | 1 | 100 | 0 | - | 1 | 100 | 6 | 100 | 0 | - | 6 | 100 |
| Carpenter | 3 | 100 | 0 | - | 3 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 0 | - | 2 | 100 |
| Farmer | 5 | 100 | 0 | - | 5 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 0 | - | 4 | 100 |
| Totals | 38 | 79.2 | 10 | 20.8 | 48 | 100 | 29 | 74.4 | 10 | 25.6 | 39 | 100 |

Table 2
Professional Occupations: Frequencies Of Combined Publishers Series

| | Male | | Female | | Totals | |
|-----------------------------|------|------|--------|------|--------|-----|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Headteacher | 10 | 91 | 1 | 9 | 11 | 100 |
| Class teacher | 14 | 60.9 | 9 | 39.1 | 23 | 100 |
| Police Officer | 4 | 100 | 0 | - | 4 | 100 |
| Nurse | 0 | 100 | 8 | 100 | 8 | 100 |
| Doctor | 8 | 100 | 0 | - | 8 | 100 |
| Shop-keeper | 10 | 83.3 | 2 | 16.7 | 12 | 100 |
| Builder/Construction worker | 7 | 100 | 0 | - | 7 | 100 |
| Carpenter | 5 | 100 | 0 | - | 5 | 100 |
| Farmer | 9 | 100 | 0 | - | 9 | 100 |
| Totals | 67 | 77 | 20 | 23 | 87 | 100 |

The study concludes that both Longman and College Press textbooks reflect stereotyped traditional professional occupations. Overall the female gender is poorly represented in the professional occupations and that the teaching profession has a better gender balance compared to the other professions in this study.

Gender Ratios In Domestic Chores

Table 3
Gender Ratios In Domestic Chores: Frequencies Of
Separate Publishers Series

| | Longman Zimbabwe | | | | | | College Press | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|---|--------|-----|--------|-----|---------------|-----|--------|------|--------|-----|
| | Male | | Female | | Totals | | Male | | Female | | Totals | |
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Cooking | 0 | - | 3 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 0 | - | 6 | 100 | 6 | 100 |
| Sewing | 0 | - | 9 | 100 | 9 | 100 | 0 | - | 8 | 100 | 8 | 100 |
| *General house chores | 0 | - | 13 | 100 | 13 | 100 | 1 | 10 | 9 | 100 | 10 | 100 |
| Totals | 0 | - | 25 | 100 | 25 | 100 | 1 | 4.2 | 23 | 95.8 | 24 | 100 |

*General House chores represented pounding, dusting, and other small household duties.

Table 4
Domestic Chores: Frequencies Of Combined Publishers Series

| | f | % |
|---|----|------|
| Males in cooking roles | 0 | - |
| Females in cooking roles | 9 | 18.4 |
| Males in sewing/mending clothes roles | 0 | - |
| Females in sewing/mending clothes roles | 17 | 34.7 |
| Males in general house chores | 1 | 2.0 |
| Females in general house chores | 22 | 44.9 |
| Totals | 49 | 100 |

In Table 3 the Longman series records 0% on male gender involvement in domestic chores while College Press series records 4.2% a frequency of one. Combined frequencies in Table 4 reflect 2% male involvement. Overall, therefore the study concludes that the textbooks indicate very little or no male gender involvement in domestic chores.

Gender Ratios Of Leading Characters In Stories

Table 5
Leading Characters In Stories: Frequencies Of Separate Publishers Series

| | Longman | | College Press | |
|----------------------------------|---------|------|---------------|------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| Females as leading characters | 30 | 18.5 | 25 | 18.5 |
| Males as leading Characters | 84 | 51.9 | 68 | 50.4 |
| Both sexes as leading characters | 48 | 29.6 | 42 | 31.1 |

Table 6
Leading Characters In Stories: Frequencies Of Combined Publishers Series

| | f | % |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|
| Males as leading characters | 152 | 51.2 |
| Females as leading characters | 55 | 18.5 |
| Both sexes | 90 | 30.3 |

In Table 5 both series reflect that 51.2% of the units of work are exclusively for the male gender, while the female gender is reflected in 18.5% of the units and 30.3% reflecting both genders. The male gender reflects a higher percentage representation compared to units in which both sexes are represented, 30.3% (Table 6).

The study concludes that about 51% of the units in both texts are about the male gender, a percentage higher than units where both sexes are represented.

Sexist And Non-sexist Language

Table 7
Sexist And Non-sexist Language: Frequencies Of Separate Publishers Series (References To Man/Men And Woman/Women At The Exclusion Of The Other Sex.)

| | Longman | | College Press | |
|--|---------|-----|---------------|-------|
| | f | % | f | % |
| Reference to man/men at the exclusion of females | 18 | 72 | 58 | 84.1 |
| Reference to woman/women at the exclusion of males | 0 | - | 2 | 2.9 |
| Reference to both sexes | 7 | 28 | 9 | 13.0 |
| Totals | 25 | 100 | 69 | 100.0 |

Table 8
Sexist And Non-sexist Language: Frequencies Of Combined Publishers (Use Of Man/Men/Woman Women At The Exclusion Of The Other Sex.)

| | f | % |
|--|----|------|
| Reference to man/men at the exclusion of females | 76 | 80.9 |
| Reference to woman/women at the exclusion of males | 2 | 2.1 |
| Reference to both sexes | 16 | 17.0 |
| Totals | 94 | 100 |

Table 9
Sexist And Non-sexist Language: Frequencies Of Separate Publishers Series (Third Person Transformed Into He/she; Man/ Men/Woman/Women To Represent Human Beings; Animals Referred To As He/she/ Male/Female.)

| | Longman | | College Press | |
|---|---------|------|---------------|-----|
| | f | % | f | % |
| Third person transformed into male gender | 37 | 53.6 | 3 | 12 |
| Third person transformed into female gender | 2 | 2.9 | 0 | - |
| Animals referred to as males | 4 | 5.8 | 11 | 44 |
| Animals referred to as females | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| Man/men to represent human being | 17 | 24.6 | 4 | 16 |
| Woman/women to represent human beings | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| Reference to both sexes | 9 | 13.0 | 7 | 28 |
| Totals | 69 | 100 | 25 | 100 |

Table 10
Sexist And Non-Sexist Language: Frequencies Of
Combined Publishers Series (All usage)

| | f | % |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Third person translated into he | 40 | 42.6 |
| Third person translated into she | 2 | 2.1 |
| Animals referred to as males | 15 | 16.0 |
| Animals referred to as females | 0 | - |
| Man/men to represent human beings | 21 | 22.3 |
| Woman/women to represent human beings | 0 | - |
| Reference to both sexes | 16 | 17.0 |
| Totals | 94 | 100 |

In Table 7 both publishers series show a highly male sexist language, 84.1% by College Press series and 72% by Longman, while combined frequencies for both series show an 80.9% male sexist language representation (Table 8). References to the female gender at the exclusion of the male gender is reflected in College series 2.9% a frequency of 2 (Table 7). Animals are often referred to as males 16% while no animal was referred to as female (Table 10)

Most sexist language is reflected in transformation of third person into the male gender (Table 9 and Table 10) and the Longman series does this more often than College Press (Table 9). The study, therefore concludes that both Longman and College Press language series use male sexist language.

Discussion

The study shows that both Longman and College Press series reflect a male gender bias and overall that the primary school children in Zimbabwe where Longman and College Press series are predominantly used, get a very high dose of that male gender bias.

The findings of this study raises a number of issues that should be of concern to educators , parents and all advocates of equality of sexes in general and Zimbabwe's education system and society in particular.

The Zimbabwean Ministry of Education and Culture through its Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), which approves all textbooks used in Primary and Secondary schools, has not effectively used its role to influence publishers to reflect a gender balance in these texts. The textbooks continue to appear in lists of approved textbooks year after year, thus giving a seal of approval to their content. The Campaign to Impede Sex-stereo-typing in the young (CISSY) cited by the New Jersey Group (1973) assert that there should be a condemnation of constant and consistent publication of existing stereo-types. While the Zimbabwean society has condemned sexism in the adult population, it has been silent or has developed a non-action oriented approach to examining the nature of the curriculum in relation to gender issues, that children are exposed to in the primary schools.

The textbooks' reflection of stereo-typed traditional choices in most occupations, domestic chores, is a very retrogressive move considering the progress and current trends towards gender balance. Today's trends seek to open career opportunities to both sexes and some even go further to accommodate the previously deprived gender (Sweedish Board of Education, 1980, 1986). One looks in vain for a single scene or situation for the millions of men and women the world over in new non-traditional roles they play everyday. Huck, Hickman and Helper (1987) believe that contemporary literature must reflect the assumption that a wide range of occupations is possible for all persons regardless of sex. The books should help the reader to see a new perspective such as males in the nursing field, women in the police and armed forces, and women as pilots, and many other examples. Maier (1969) observed that the activities of men

and women had changed in both family and other spheres. It is important therefore, that the two language series in this study take cognisance of these current changes.

The suggestion is not to force children into patterns which they are ill-prepared or ill-suited but as Huck et al.(1987) assert, ignorance, negative guidance and conditioning against trying new things, which these textbooks seem to perpetuate cannot be said to be giving the primary school child a really free choice. It is particularly important that these textbooks play a more positive role. Mead (1976) noted that publishers and mass media in general contribute to stereo-types which interfere with the child's ability to grow up aspiring to diverse kinds of work.

Lastly the authenticity of these texts in relation to reflecting current trends on issues of gender is called to question. The texts do not reflect a single female as a farmer yet the rural women in Zimbabwe are in the forefront in food production. Mulders (1986) in a study commissioned by the Zimbabwean Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs (CDWA) found that 74% of females were involved in agricultural production. A UNICEF (1985) report identified crop production, and production in general as one of the burdens of the rural women. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (1984), indicates a high percentage of economically active women in the agricultural labour force in Africa. Afonja (1989) says that recent appraisals of women's output in Nigeria show that more than 50% of the labour utilized for agriculture comes from women. Post-independent Zimbabwean women are involved in a lot of construction projects, in police and armed forces, and continue to experience increased enrollments in careers previously thought of as exclusively male. These trends in professional occupations are not peculiar to Zimbabwe only, but the world over.

There is increased pressure in the world today to refrain from sexist language, yet another example which these schemes have chosen to ignore. During the twenty fourth session of the UNESCO general conference, the issue of sexist language was raised and a call was made to desist from gender-specific language. UNESCO urged authors and editors of documents, articles, speeches and other publishable material to avoid use of sexist language. Subsequently Unesco published a guideline for non-sexist language.

Lastly the most important issue is not only that these texts are retrogressive, and continue to exist in the world of their own, but that they may not be reflecting an authentic historical record of gender issues in the world today and in Zimbabwe in particular. Scott in Kleinberg (1989) says that historians searching for the evidence about women, have confronted the phenomenon of women's invisibility in that they are systematically left out of the official record. The publishers of these texts cannot and should not be allowed to reprint unauthentic content and continue to make money out of textbooks that do not serve Zimbabwe well.

While Zimbabwe legislated for equality of sexes, the Zimbabwean society has not condemned the reprints of the texts neither has the education system which should take the leading role in decrying their use and or prevalence. Mead (1976) asserts that educational changes are required to keep pace with legislation and social practices that seek to eliminate prejudice and discrimination.

Conclusion

Both publishers textbooks depict a male dominated world, and that position is at variance with post independent Zimbabwe's position on gender issues. Zimbabwe has not actively and effectively used legislation on equality of sexes to influence and encourage publishers to review the textbooks or at least stop their reprints.

A concerted effort by government, publishers, teachers and parents to address sexism in these textbooks is required. Such a move is important to Zimbabwe in particular because the high dose of male dominance the textbooks reflect may develop attitudes inconsistent with trends in the world today. The likelihood of male dominant attitudes being imprinted in the Zimbabwean primary school child is high, because the primary school child spends more time in Language Arts programmes than in any other subject on the curriculum. At any rate as Bryne (1979) rightly suggests, the one sided presentation of society to our pupils is harmful to both the educational system and social development.

The task for Zimbabwean educationists today, I believe, is to start a critical appraisal of the current content of textbooks across the board; at all levels of the education system and in a variety of subject areas to try and redress and or create awareness to a variety

of audiences other than pupils. Textbooks in the indigenous languages should be of interest because the culture to a large extent is conservative in advocating for gender balance. Further still, may be the task for the educator should not only end at analyzing the texts for children but also examine the bias that may exist in selecting prescribed texts for schools. For example are set books for female authors ever prescribed at secondary level? Another issue to examine is whether or not the sex of the writer influences the style of writing in issues of gender.

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APPENDIX I

LONGMAN ZIMBABWE SERIES

| Book Level | Title | Date |
|------------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| Grade 1 | | |
| Book 1 | Pictures and Words | 1967 |
| Book 2 | Benny and Betty | 1967 |
| Grade 2 | | |
| Book 1 | Benny's Family | 1968 |
| Book 2 | In the Village and in the Town | 1968 |
| Grade 3 | | |
| Book 1 | Life at Home | 1968 |
| Book 2 | On Holiday | 1968 |
| Book 3 | Lets Go | 1968 |
| Grade 4 | | |
| Book 1 | Railway | No date |
| Book 2 | Fair Exchange | No date |
| Book 3 | Finding the way | No date |
| Grade 5 | | |
| Book 1 | Treasure | 1980 |
| Book 2 | The moon and Matedza | 1980 |
| Book 3 | Crossing the River | 1980 |
| Grade 6 | | |
| Book 1 | How Many Towns | 1980 |
| Book 2 | The Old Road | 1980 |
| Book 3 | Pipes and Marimba | 1980 |

Grade 7

| | | |
|--------|-----------------------------|------|
| Book 1 | Heroes | 1983 |
| Book 2 | One Thousand Pieces of Gold | 1983 |
| Book 3 | Song, Dance and Story | 1983 |

APPENDIX 2

COLLEGE PRESS SERIES

| Book Level | Title | Date |
|------------|----------------------|------|
| Grade 1 | | |
| Book 1 | Ready to Read | 1979 |
| Book 2 | Ready to Read | 1979 |
| Book 3 | Ready to Read | 1979 |
| Grade 2 | | |
| Book 1 | New Syllabus English | 1981 |
| Book 2 | New Syllabus English | 1981 |
| Book 3 | New Syllabus English | 1981 |
| Grade 3 | | |
| Book 1 | Kites | 1982 |
| Book 2 | Cattle for Sale | 1982 |
| Book 3 | New Syllabus | 1982 |
| Grade 4 | New Syllabus | 1984 |
| Grade 5 | New Syllabus | 1984 |
| Grade 6 | New Syllabus | 1985 |
| Grade 7 | New Syllabus | 1985 |



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